

DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

The western and southern portion of the East Mountain Area are primarily under control of the Cibola National Forest. The village of Tijeras is the only incorporated municipality within the area, although many unincorporated villages or communities are located there including: Chilili, Juan Tomas, Escobosa, ponderosa Pine, Cedro, San Antonio, Sandia Park, Cedar Crest, Sedillo and Carnuel. Chilili and Carnuel are historical settlements associated with Spanish land grants. The incorporated Village of Tijeras has a draft zoning map with accompanying regulations, and a development policy plan. The I-40 corridor splits the area into two subregions. Historic Route 66 traverses the area, and is still emotionally (if not physically) the core roadway for local residents in an east-west direction.

“I began to talk about our western bias concerning the structure of time. I said that we think of time as linear, flowing from past, to present, to future like a river, whereas the Pawtucket-Micmac Indian thinks of it as a lake or pool in which all events are contained.

- John Hansen Mitchell

“Ceremonial Time: Fifteen Thousand Years on One Square Mile”, 1984

The East Mountain Area has primarily developed as large lot, low-density residential subdivisions, although there are some subdivisions on medium-density, small lots (i.e., Sandia Knolls alone contains 10 percent of the East Mountain Area population). Most of the vacant land is currently zoned for agricultural and large-lot residential development (A-2). Environmental considerations will reinforce the large-lot development pattern or require clustering with community utility systems in the future.

Although the East Mountain Area was primarily agricultural prior to the 1970s, there is little evidence of large scale active agricultural land use now. What agricultural pursuits do exist are small scale ranching and family farm operations located primarily in the eastern and southern portions of the East Mountain Area.

As previously discussed, population pressure on the East Mountain Area is significant, and is expected to continue if environmental constraints are addressed and mitigated. Increasing development pressures have resulted in a proliferation of mobile homes, conventional “stick-built” homes, and subdivisions. Commercial uses have at the same time increased and grown in a somewhat haphazard manner. The result in many cases has been inappropriate and unattractive development. Against the background of great scenic beauty, this contrast becomes even more disturbing visually.

A land use study for a portion of the East Mountain Area has been completed by Southwest Land Research, Inc. as part of a larger study assessing wastewater needs of the County. The study area only included the Tijeras Arroyo drainage area, and some of the developed areas along North Highway 14 and Highway 337 (South 14). These data are included in **Table 6**. It is interesting to note how much of the area is vacant land, which illustrates that there is a capacity for future development from a land availability standpoint.

The Bernalillo County Assessor’s Office provided the planning team with very specific data pertaining to the East Mountain Area with regard to vacant land. Excluding the acreage under public ownership, approximately 96,848 acres are available for development. Of this acreage, there are 8,263 already platted parcels of 5 acres or less in size that are still vacant in the East Mountain Area (or 57% of the parcels).

TABLE 6
TIJERAS DRAINAGE BASIN STUDY AREA
LAND USE

Vacant Land In Study Area

Zoning	Acres	Percent
TOTAL	22,834.20	100.00
Commercial	208.50	0.91
Industrial	192.30	0.84
Mixed Use	195.00	—
Residential	22,238.40	97.00

Developed Land in Study Area

Land Use	Acres	Percent
TOTAL	66,822.60	100.00
Residential	11,714.70	17.50
Commercial	43.90	.06
Industrial	320.80	.48
Institutional	78.50	.11
Vacant	52,750.30	78.90

Source: Southwest Land Research, 1991

of record in the area). This large number of small lots that have already been platted necessitates a future planning approach that can guide development on existing lots as well as new

subdivisions and land divisions. The following data summarize vacant land parcels in the East Mountain Area.

VACANT PARCELS
IN THE
EAST MOUNTAIN AREA

0-2 acre parcels **5,368.87 acres**
(5,103 parcels; 35% of parcels of record)

2-5 acre parcels **10,269.09 acres**
(3,160 parcels; 22% of parcels of record)

5-20 acre parcels **14,838.59 acres**
(1,504 parcels; 10% of parcels of record)

20-100 acre parcels **24,994.76 acres**
(563 parcels; 4% of parcels of record)

100-600 acre parcels **64,451.28 acres**
(233 parcels; 2% of parcels of record)

600 + acre parcels **73,773.25 acres**
(113 parcels; 0.8% of parcels of record)

All Vacant Parcels **193,695.84 acres**
(10,676 parcels; 74% of parcels of record)

Source: Bernalillo County Assessor's Office,
computer file data, November 19, 1991

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Commercial activities are located along Highway 14, Highway 337, and along Historic Route 66. Tijeras and Cedar Crest have the largest concentrations of commercial property, although commercial nodes exist in most of the established communities. Nearly half of the 137,000 square feet of new non-residential space constructed between 1983 and 1990 is located north of I-40 adjacent to Highway 14 in the vicinity of Cedar Crest (SWLR, 1990). Edgewood, located approximately two miles east of the County line, is developing as a commercial center, serving many Area residents.

There has been a trend in recent years for commercial property to develop in a strip along the two main local transportation corridors, Highway 14/337 and old US Route 66. Most of these commercial properties were approved through Bernalillo County's Special Use Permit process rather than through a zone map amendment procedure. This results in an unplanned approach to commercial development as the underlying land use and its relationship to surrounding future uses is addressed negligibly if at all. It is also difficult to terminate a special use once it has been established and private funds have been invested in site improvements and buildings. If the use is appropriate for permanent use, the underlying zoning should be addressed. Sixty of the 89 Special-Use Permits granted in the East Mountain Area in the last fifteen years have been for new commercial uses. The large number of approved Special Use Permits in the area indicates a need to assess zoning in the area rather than bowing to political pressure of endless requests for exceptions to existing zoning through special-use permits.

The East Mountain Area has a very small percentage of its land use in commercial development (estimated to be approximately 1 percent by area), and the existing residents would, for the most part, like to see it stay that way. Sixty-six and eight tenths (66.8) percent of the questionnaire respondents said they did not want more stores of any kind in the area. Still, adequately sized areas for future commercial growth must be included in future zone amendments for the area to ensure sufficient neighborhood services and business opportunities to meet even minimal service needs. There is continuing interest from some local residents in establishing new commercial enterprises in the area, as evidenced by the 11 building permits issued for new commercial uses just between January and August of 1991.

Future commercial development should be on a neighborhood scale – sited and designed so it is consistent with the goals and objectives (Section I) of this plan (in designated commercial nodes, and in character with the rural environment). This is consistent with views expressed through the public opinion survey, where 64.6 percent of respondents indicated that only designated commercial centers should support business operations.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Industrial lands encompass less than half of one percent of land area in the East Mountain Area (approximately 320 acres). This primarily consists of the cement plant in Tijeras (employing over 100 people). Due to the sensitive environment in the area, few feel that additional industry is appropriate. In fact, 77.8 percent of survey respondents were opposed to any new industry being allowed in the East Mountain Area.

Given the fact that the vast majority of Area residents commute daily to Albuquerque, and given that the number of residents is rapidly increasing (which will increase and perpetuate negative impacts from heavy traffic) appropriate new employment opportunities should be encouraged. Heavy manufacturing

and its negative environmental impacts should be discouraged. “Clean”, small-scale employment opportunities that do not require excessive water consumption and that would reduce negative effects on air quality and roadways should be encouraged.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

According to the US Census, there were an estimated 5,303 housing units in the East Mountain Area at the end of 1990. An additional 161 new homes have been permitted between January and August of 1991.

The East Mountain Area was responsible for 37 percent of all Bernalillo County zoning and building applications in 1990, and for 36 percent of all applications in 1989. The area accounted for 22.6 percent of all applications since 1973, for a total of 6,076 zoning and building permits (Bernalillo County Zoning, Building and Planning Department, 1990). Nearly half of all new single family residences are built outside of subdivisions on scattered lots throughout the area. This has implications for implementation strategies for any new growth management policies developed which must go beyond amendments to the Subdivision Code in order to affect all new construction.

Subdivisions with extensive new construction include: Sandia Knolls, Magic Valley, Piñon Ridge, Sierra Vista, Dennis Chavez Estates, Tijeras Land Estates, Tablazon, Steeplechase, Capital Valley, Skyland, and Manzano Springs (SWLR, 1990). The major new subdivision in the area is Mountain Ranch located at the northern edge of the study area. Substantial infill opportunities exist in all of the platted subdivisions.

The type of housing in the East Mountain Area is estimated to consist of approximately 80 percent conventional single-family detached homes and 20 percent mobile homes. There is very little multi-family housing in the area. It was estimated that there were 1,205 mobile homes in the East Mountain Area at the end of 1990 (Bernalillo County Zoning, Building and Planning Department). The East Mountain Area has the second highest number of mobile homes by area in the County. Thirty to 50 percent of the mobile homes permitted in Bernalillo County each year since 1983 are in the East Mountain Area (SWLR, 1990). Over 72 percent of the public survey respondents said they would like to see mobile homes only on specifically zoned lots, and not mixed in with conventional housing.

Most of the existing housing units are associated with individual septic tanks for wastewater disposal. There have been tremendous enforcement, installation, and inspection problems associated with septic tanks in the East Mountain Area, which are addressed elsewhere in this report. There is no known accurate count of the total number of septic tanks installed in the area. It is known that 1,848 septic tank permits were issued by Bernalillo County in the area between 1980 and 1990. An additional 161 septic tank permits were issued between January and August of 1991 (Bernalillo County Zoning, Building and Planning Department, 1991). There is no information available on the number of septic tanks that have been installed in the East Mountain Area without a permit.

The Census Data in **Tables 7 and 8** provide additional information on housing characteristics in the East Mountain Area. (See next page.)

TABLE 7

**1990 EAST MOUNTAIN AREA CHARACTERISTICS BY TRACT, HOUSING UNITS, TENURE AND VACANCY STATUS
1990 CENSUS STF1A DATA**

TRACT AREA	Total Housing Units	Occupied Units	Owner Occupied Units	Renter Occupied Units	Vacant Units for Rent	Vacant Units for Sale	Other Vacant Units	Percent Vacant Units	Persons per Owner Unit	Persons per Renter Unit
North of I-40 (38.01)	2,848	2,636	2,356	280	25	58	129	7.4	2.72	2.39
South of I-40 (38.02)	2,230	1,937	1,740	197	33	50	210	13.1	2.80	2.43
TOTAL EMA	5,078	4,376	4,096	477	58	108	339	—	—	—
TOTAL Bernalillo County	—	185,582	112,589	72,993	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL State of New Mexico	—	542,709	365,965	176,744	—	—	—	—	—	—

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, 1990

TABLE 8

**1990 EAST MOUNTAIN AREA CHARACTERISTICS BY TRACT, HOUSING UNITS BY STRUCTURE TYPE
1990 CENSUS STF1A DATA**

TRACT AREA	Total Housing Units	Single Family Detached	Single Family Attached	Units in Duplexes	Units in 3-4 Plexes	Other Multi-Family	Mobile Home	Other Housing Units
North of I-40 (38.01)	2848	2282	24	13	11	14	488	16
South of I-40 (38.02)	2230	1475	23	3	1	0	717	21
TOTAL EMA	5078	3757	37	16	12	14	1,205	37

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, 1990

HOUSING COSTS

The distribution of income in the East Mountain Area varies from the County average in that a higher proportion of East Mountain residents have low to moderate incomes (less than \$20,000/year), but there is also a higher proportion than the County average that earn high incomes (\$35,000/year or more) (BBER, 1989). This dichotomy is also represented in housing costs in the area.

Recent housing construction trends indicate that the average home cost in the East Mountain Area is increasing faster than in the County as a whole. Yet the East Mountain Area also has a high proportion of lower priced housing, principally in mobile homes. However, the trend appears to be moving toward an increase in housing prices in the area, and the very low end housing is expected to become a smaller and smaller percentage of the total housing stock over time.

From 1980 to 1987, nearly 80 percent of new single-family housing built in the East Mountain Area had an estimated value based on building permit data of over \$96,000. In the County as a whole, less than half of new single-family housing fell into that price range (SWLR, 1990).

The 1990 US Census Data indicate that owner occupied units in the area north of I-40 had a median value of \$107,800 (up from \$71,900 in 1980). The area south of I-40 had a median home value of \$92,800 (up from \$45,800 in 1980). These are very high values compared to the average values for Bernalillo County as a whole (\$88,700), or for the State of New Mexico average (\$70,100). The north of I-40 area even exceeds the median price in Santa Fe County, which is \$103,300 (See **Table 9**).

Data received from East Mountain Area realtors confirm these increased values. One listing of 185 home sales during 1990 and 1991 showed a median sales price of \$89,780 for the area, and another listing of 50 closings during 1991 with sales prices resulted in a median value of \$102,928 (Associated Mountain Realtors, 1991).

Cash rent values are also increasing in the area. The 1990 Census Data indicate that renter occupied housing units in the East Mountain Area had a median rent of \$424/month in the area north of I-40, and a median rent of \$296/month south of I-40. This compares to a \$351/month median rent in Bernalillo County as a whole, \$425/month in Santa Fe County, and \$312/month for the State of New Mexico as a whole. (See **Table 10** for additional Census Data information on median rent values.)

These high housing values reflect the larger lots associated with mountain development, as well as the desirability of the area, and the increase in expensive custom built homes. In the very near future, when more stringent environmental standards pertaining to water and wastewater criteria go into effect, the cost of housing in the East Mountain Area will only increase. Coupled with the environmental and rural character necessity of maintaining or increasing the large lot residential type of development, growth in the East Mountain Area may soon be limited only to those in upper income levels.

The plan alternatives section of this plan will address the future development scenarios for the area based upon these existing conditions.

TABLE 9

**1990 EAST MOUNTAIN AREA CHARACTERISTICS BY TRACT
OWNER - OCCUPIED UNITS BY SPECIFIED VALUES
1990 CENSUS STF1A DATA**

TRACT AREA	Under \$50,000	\$50,000 - 74,999	\$75,000 - 99,999	\$100,000 - 149,999	\$150,000 - 199,999	\$200,000 + over	Median Value
North of I-40 (38.01)	86	237	425	597	246	117	\$ 107,800
South of I-40 (38.02)	148	174	238	277	105	40	92,800
Bernalillo County	—	—	—	—	—	—	88,700
Santa Fe County	—	—	—	—	—	—	103,300
State of New Mexico	—	—	—	—	—	—	70,100

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, 1990

TABLE 10

**1990 EAST MOUNTAIN AREA CHARACTERISTICS BY TRACT
RENTER - OCCUPIED UNITS BY SPECIFIED RENTS
1990 CENSUS STF1A DATA**

TRACT AREA	No Cash Rent	\$1 - 199	\$200 - 299	\$300 - 399	\$400 - 499	\$500 - 749	\$750 and over	Median Cash Rent
North of I-40 (38.01)	27	20	40	43	40	72	18	\$424
South of I-40 (38.02)	30	38	42	34	11	26	6	\$296
Bernalillo County	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	#351
Santa Fe County	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$425
State of New Mexico	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$312

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, 1990

(map – full page)

